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12/05/17

If December is about traditions, there's a staff favorite at BNC: our annual N.C. Small Business of the Year luncheon. We hear a lot of great stories as editors and writers, but the stories of business owners who overcame natural disasters, debilitating panic attacks or a fall from the roof, slept in their cars and scraped together every penny to build their ideas are pretty inspiring. The winner has been our December cover for several years running and this month is no exception. Jerry Pedley is a self-proclaimed Iowa farm boy unable to finish community college because he was already supporting a family as a young husband and father at 19. Today, he is president of **Mertek Solutions Inc.** in Sanford.

Mertek manufactures robots busy assembling everything from cosmetics cases to car parts in factories as far away as India and China. Behind Pedley is a proud town — there to watch him receive the award at the Carolina Inn in Chapel Hill was Sanford Mayor Chet Mann and Lee County economic developer Bob Joyce. Runners-up in this year's contest are: **Appalachian Antique Hardwoods**, **Quilt Lizzy** and **Transportation Impact**. See more from Friday's event below — then read their stories in this month's issue.

Allison

[dailydigest@businessnc.com](mailto:dailydigest@businessnc.com)



*Benchmark Litigation* names Brooks Pierce  
“North Carolina Law Firm of the Year(s)”

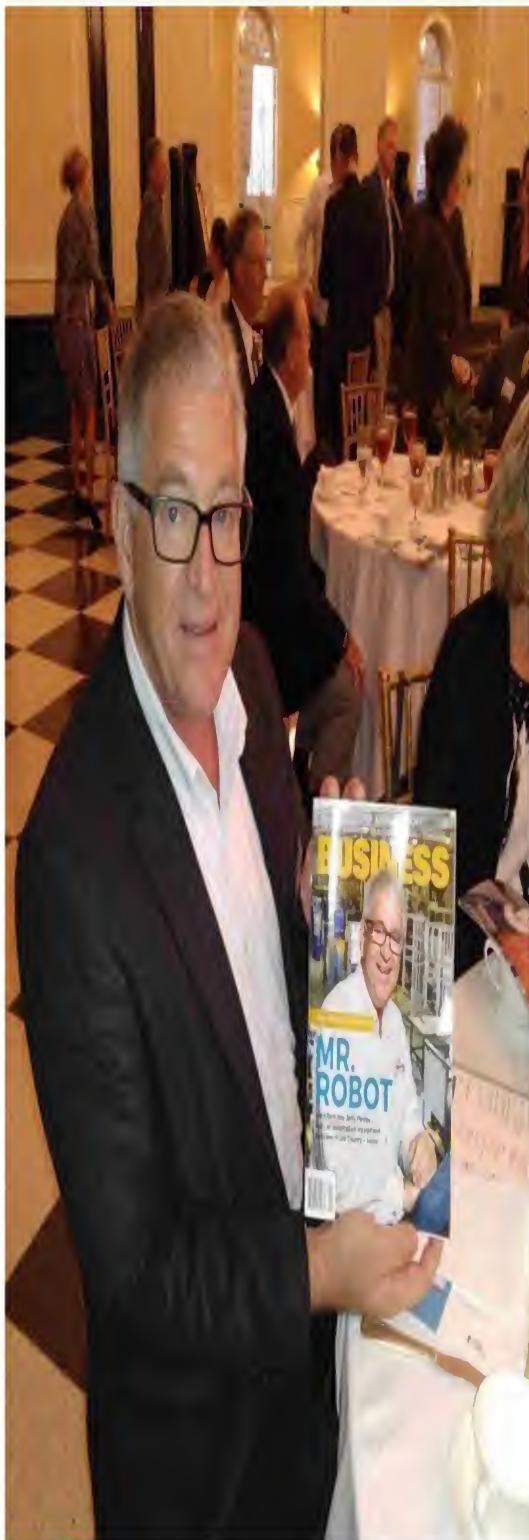
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## Small businesses, big dreams

In the last weeks of her life, Susan Harris' 89-year-old mother instructed her daughter to pursue something she loved. Now, Quilt Lizzy is the umbrella for several retail quilting shops, classroom space and a franchise location. Harris is one of the top sellers of Brother sewing machines in the country. Lacking a large budget, she bought the "ugliest buildings" in small towns but wisely knew that quilters would make the trip for places where they felt welcomed. "My shops are counseling centers," she said Friday at the Carolina Inn. "They are places where people come to feel good."





SCOTT LIZZY / President Susan Hams, top, accepts her award as a finalist for the 2017 N.C. Small Business of the Year. Jerry Pedley, bottom right, is president of Mertek Solutions, this year's winner. *Photos courtesy of Cathy Martin and Lee County Economic*

## Today's number: 98%

Of U.S. companies are small businesses, according to Will Miller, deputy secretary of the N.C. Department of Commerce, who spoke at Friday's luncheon.

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## AROUND THE STATE

### What do N.C. tax cuts say about GOP plans for the nation?

(*Washington Post*)

North Carolina legislators have slashed corporate taxes in a way consistent with the potential national cuts. The boom promised along with those N.C. cuts hasn't materialized. Instead, the state's steady growth mirrors national growth. But so far North Carolina has fared better since the tax cuts than Kansas did after massive cuts there led to huge deficits.

*(Wilmington StarNews)*

GenX, a chemical at the heart of contamination concerns surrounding Chemours' Fayetteville Works plant, has been found in food for the first time. The N.C. Department of Environmental Quality is investigating honey collected by a Robeson County farmer in which testing found 2,070 parts per trillion of the chemical. The N.C. Department of Health and Human Services has set a goal of 140 ppt.

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### **Belk backs away from bell ringer ban**

*(Charlotte Observer)*

Salvation Army bell ringers will return to the entrances of 294 Belk stores for the holiday season after a brief attempt by the chain to ban them. The company had initially decided not to allow the bell ringers. But that decision led to customer backlash.

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### **Utilities file eminent domain cases for Atlantic Coast Pipeline property**

*(Triangle Business Journal)*

Duke Energy and Dominion Energy have filed the first North Carolina eminent domain cases for the Atlantic Coast Pipeline. The utilities said they filed the procedures to gain easements for the pipeline in federal court after three years of negotiations with landowners along the route. The companies say 80 percent of landowners have already come to easement agreements. Duke Energy and Dominion Energy are building the pipeline to transport fracked natural gas from West Virginia to North Carolina.

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### **Developer plans 300,000-square-foot Wilmington facility**

*(Wilmington Biz)*

Chesterfield, a Jacksonville, Fla., industrial and office space developer is planning a 300,000-square-foot warehouse at the port of Wilmington. An 11-acre site next to the facility could be used for further expansion.

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### **Carolinas' latest low-cost grocer adds delivery**

*(Charlotte Observer)*

Grocery delivery startup Shift will begin offering delivery from Lidl stores in North and South Carolina beginning Dec. 7. Shift launched in Charlotte last year with delivery from

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## **Startup aims to open dog bar in Winston-Salem**

*(Triad Business Journal)*

Mutts Whine and Bark is looking at a space on the outskirts of downtown Winston-Salem to open an indoor dog park and bar. The startup's space will include an indoor space for dogs to run around, a bar, and an outdoor area where owners can take their pets.

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## **Charlotte co-working portfolio grows**

*(Charlotte Business Journal)*

Office Evolution, a Colorado business-to-business franchise, plans to open a 6,104-square-foot business center at Two Resource Square in Charlotte. Charlotte has attracted several local and national co-working spaces in the past year.

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